CHARLOTTE MARIE COWAN

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Charlotte Marie Cowan

(1886 - 1979)

Miss Cowan was born in Hamakua Poko, Maui. She taught in local schools for thirty-eight years from 1908 until 1946 when she retired.

Her father, James Cowan, was an engineer who came from Scotland to work initially for Catton, Neill and Company. He later worked on several plantations in an executive capacity, finally becoming manager of the Kona Sugar Company.

Miss Cowan was educated by governesses and by nuns at the Sacred Hearts Convent in Honolulu. Against her family's wishes, she attended the Territorial Normal School and graduated in 1908. She then was assigned the position of principal of an eight-room school in Kona for two years. She also taught at Kalihi Waena Elementary School, Kaahumanu School, Manoa School and Central Grammar School.

Miss Cowan reminisces about her family and their way of life, her teaching experiences and trips abroad, her interests and art projects. She also relates accounts of the Revolution of 1893 and the 1899-1900 bubonic plague crisis in Honolulu.

Lynda Mair, Interviewer

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLOTTE MARIE COWAN

At her Pohai Nani apartment, 45-090 Namoku Street, Kaneohe 96744

In late 1971

C: Charlotte Marie Cowan

M: Lynda Mair, Interviewer

M: To begin with, I need to know your name, your family's names and so forth.

C: Um hm. Well, I'm Charlotte Marie. Charlotte M. Cowan is my signature. (she spells it) So many people spell it E-N and it's A-N. And I have to tell you a cute story. Is this all on now?

M: Um hm, that's okay.

C: I came here [to Pohai Nani] as a stranger and sat at a table with two other ladies and one of them said, "Now what is your name?" and I said, "It's Cowan, but I've just come from San Francisco where they always called me Cowen and it's Cowan--C-O-W-A-N." And I said, "What is your name?" and she says, "Fodder for the cow," and I looked at her and said, "Oh, Hay?" She says, "That's right, I'm Mrs. Hay." (laughter) And the lady across from me said, "And cranberries." [Mrs. Frances W. Cran] (laughter) I thought that was cute.

M: Uh huh. Let's see now. Can you give me your place of birth?

C: I was born in Hamakua Poko, Maui in 1886. Now let me see. In 1886. That would make me eighty-four now, wouldn't it? Yes, 1886.

M: Okay. Hamakua Poko. Okay, I got that. And your parents came here then . . .

C: My father came directly here from Scotland.

M: Oh, I see. When did he arrive, do you know?

C: Well, my brother Charlie [Charles Cowan] was born in 1882,

because he's four years older than I am, and he [her father] must have come over before that. He must have come around 1879 or 1880, somewhere around there, because he was here a few years before he and my mother were married.

M: Your mother was . . .

C: My mother was born and raised here.

M: Oh, I see. Let's go back now. Let me get your father's name straight.

C: James Cowan.

M: And he came from what part of Scotland?

C: He came from Broughty Ferry, Dundee, Scotland.

M: Would you spell that? (she spells it) Okay.

C: I imagine about 1880.

M: Do you know why he came?

C: Yes, I do. I think another Scotchman was here. Robert Catton came out earlier and I think he was going into the sugar business and my father was an engineer and they were building a lot of sugar mills here. So I think--I'm not sure about this, but I have an idea that because my father was an engineer that he asked him to come out here, because he went right into the firm with this man, Catton.

M: What firm was that?

C: Catton, Neill and Company, [Limited].

M: Where was their headquarters?

C: Right in Honolulu. And then my father wasn't there very long. He started right out on to the different sugar plantations. He built several of the mills.

M: I see, and did your father know Mr. Catton back in Scotland?

C: I have an idea they must have met somewhere. I wouldn't know, but we've been family friends ever since.

M: I see. Was you father a graduate of a university, then, in engineering?

C: Oh, he must have gone through whatever requisitions were necessary. He must have had them because his family was very well-to-do and they had every advantage, so I have an idea that he had the best of educations. There's his picture there. You can see he was quite an intelligent-looking man.

M: Was this Broughty Ferry the family estate sort of thing or was that a town?

C: No, it's in Perthshire. (spells it) It's a county, Perthshire. They're all different sections and that's in Perth. He was one of a large family. Well, anything more about my father?

M: Well, I was wondering. You mentioned that his family was well-to-do and I wondered what more you could remember about them.

C: Well, the reason I know that--he was a great one for not talking about himself. If you had to learn something, you got it the hard way and I got this information about his family when I went back to visit Scotland.

There was a Baxter Park. It seems that his family was an extremely wealthy family and they gave this park to the city--Baxter Park. This is a strange thing to recall, but when I went back to Scotland, I learned that my cousin's name was Jean Ross-Baxter. And when I went back a few years later, one of my other cousins said, "I don't know how Cousin Jean got the name of Ross-Baxter," and me, from Honolulu, had to say, "Well, your grandmother was a Miss Baxter."

M: Oh. (chuckles)

C: Now, isn't that something?

M: Um hm. Uh huh.

C: "Oh," she says, "then she got it from her family." I said, "Yes, the name Ross-Baxter is her family name." The Baxters were extremely wealthy people. They built schools and universities and parks, and they've left their mark in this Dundee. So I learnt this the roundabout way. When I went back forty or fifty years later, this last year, I said, "Now show me Baxter Park." (laughter) So they showed me Baxter Park in Dundee. I was taken through there, saw where my grandmother lived and the old family place. It's one of those old big stone houses with ivy all over it.

M: Uh huh. Were they titled?

C: Pardon?

M: Were they titled or just wealthy gentry?

C: Oh, they would be gentry definitely.

M: I see, but were they titled?

C. No. No, I don't think so. I never heard of a Ross-Baxter being titled. The Ross is a very good Scotch name and I think there's a Sir Alan Ross and quite a number of Rosses who are titled, but in our family, no. I don't know of any title.

M: Okay. Let's see. We were talking about this Catton, Neill and Company. What kind of business were they, just a contracting firm?

C: I think so. Catton and Neill. Yes, I think they were a contracting firm.

M: Um hm. So your father came and worked for them.

C: No, I don't think he came to work for them because he didn't work there very long. He just came there and went right on out to the plantations. So maybe he just came there or maybe they called him to come over because the plantations were being built and had this engineer come over. He may have written to him to come over. I don't know how he came over.

M: I see.

C: He didn't come over to work with Catton, Neill. The reason I say that he came over about that time is because they knew each other, being Scotchmen, and one must have said to the other, "Well, the mills are going up now and that's your line. You'd better come on over." So from then on he built seven or eight of the big mills here in the Islands.

M: Oh he did? Which ones offhand can you remember?

C: I don't think he built the Maui one. I think he was too young. That's where I was born and he must have been in his late twenties, I guess, or early thirties, so I doubt if he built it. I don't know, but I know he went to Kahuku Plantation from there and he usually either built them or renovated them and ran them for a few years and then

moved to another one and did the same thing. I heard just the other day that he built seven. Now I know that he built the one in Waipahu and he built the one at Aiea, then he built the big sugar refinery in Aiea--the Honolulu Sugar Company. I know those for a fact because I lived on those plantations and I know. And then he became superintendent of the factory area, you know, and then we went to Kauai and he did a lot of renovating of that sugar mill on Kauai--Eleele. And Kahuku.

You'll be interested to know that in Kahuku he was taken seriously ill and they had to bring him over on a stretcher up a trail over the Pali. There were no roads. These Hawaiian men carried him on a stretcher up the side of the mountain and down to the other side.

M: Oh good grief!

C: There were no roads up the Pali but they carried him on a stretcher. How they did it, I don't know.

M: About when would this have been, about 1890 or so?

C: Oh, let me see. I was about four or five years old then.

M: So around 1890.

C: It would be about 1890.

M: My gosh. What was he ill with?

C: He had a stroke.

M: Oh he did?

C: It seems that he was a very hardy man, very strong, and he never ever gave in to himself. He probably didn't feel very good and went out and got drenched in the rain and got tired out and then he had a stroke. He was just unable to move, so they had to bring him to the hospital and he retired for two years. He couldn't do anything. He built a house for us on Wilder Avenue in Honolulu where we lived for about two years and he just retired, that's all. He didn't do any work at all.

M: Was he paralyzed after that?

C: He was paralyzed for awhile but he got over it. He was quite well. After two years he was fine; he was out again. From there we went to Kauai. Eleele, Kauai.

M: I see. Okay. Now let's back up a little bit.

C: His first plantation was Kahuku.

M: That's where you went first.

C: Yes.

M: But you said you were born on Maui.

C: Yes. He was assistant manager to Harry [Henry Perrine] Baldwin who owned the place.

M: This was at Maui.

C: Yes.

M: Okay. Which plantation, Wailuku?

C: Hamakua Poko would not be Wailuku.

M: Was that the name of the plantation?

C: I don't know the name of the plantation. [There was a Hamakuapoko Sugar Company organized by Alexander & Baldwin.] See, I was only a little girl then.

M: Yeh. (laughs)

C: What was the name? I have a Hawaiian history book here but I don't think that would show it.

M: Well, I can look it up.

C: Yes. I think you'll find it under the name of, maybe, the Maui Agricultural Company or something like that. It was the first plantation built over there and the Harry Baldwins owned practically all of that land. They're a very well-known family here, and he and my father were very good friends. In fact, my mother used to say the two men used to go to church on Sunday just because they wanted to race their horses. (laughter)

M: Let me check this [recorder] now to see that . . . (recorder turned off and on again)

C: You like that?

M: Yeh, that's good. Let's see now. Where did your father meet your mother?

C: I wouldn't know. Now this is my mother's story: my mother's father came out from Ireland to be advisor to Kameha-

meha the First. That's real history.

M: Wow! What was his name?

C: Robert Moffat Stoney, a well-known man from Ireland. He was a lawyer and he came out to Hawaii to be advisor to Kamehameha the First and he became a great friend of Kamehameha the First's.

M: I'll be darned.

C: The [Hawaii State] Archives are full of him.

M: Oh really?

C: Oh yes. You can find out anything you want about him in the archives. I've been there several times. I learnt that he loved birds, and I like birds. I used to have birds on my lanai and everybody complained because they'd fly on their lanais and dirty them, so I had to give it up. I didn't know this until I read it in the archives that he loved birds and there was one bird that followed him everywhere he went on horseback. He had the best cattle ranch in the Islands. He had the best cattle and . . .

M: Where was this?

C: Kahuku.

M: Oh, I see.

C: He was there in Kahuku before my father came. Before that was a plantation, it was a big ranch--a cattle ranch.

M: And he owned that?

C: He owned it and he had excellent cattle.

M: Well, he came over as an advisor then. How did he end up in the cattle business?

C: Well, I suppose he had to do something on the side for himself. There's lots of land.

M: Is that where he lived too?

C: Who?

M: Your grandfather, Mr. Stoney.

C: I guess. I don't know where he lived. My grandmother,

his wife, became interested in the Mormon settlement. I have an idea that she was instigator of this Mormon establishment at Laie. I don't know, but she went back to Utah to bring the Mormon missionaries out here. She was greatly interested in the Mormon religion.

M: Oh, I see. Well, had he met her here?

C: Oh yes, he must have. I think he probably met her with Kamehameha. That's why I say, people don't realize it but my grandmother must have been either Kamehameha's friend or relative or something because that's where he worked. He must have met her there. You see, she was Hawaiian, evidently of a very high class because he must have met her where Kamehameha was, and that's her picture there so you can see . . .

M: Which one, on the left?

C: Yes. That's my grandmother. (recorder turned off and on again)

M: I want to get your grandmother's name.

C: Her name was Mary Moffat Stoney.

M: She was Hawaiian?

C: Her mother was Hawaiian, but she's half Hawaiian and half Irish. My grandfather married this Mormon lady and they had this one little girl and the mother went over to Utah among the Mormons and she died there.

M: Wait. I'm all confused now. Somehow I got off the track.

C: Well, we'll get back.

M: Yeh. Robert Stoney was your mother's father.

C: Yes, right.

M: And his wife was the daughter of . . .

C: I don't know. We don't know anything about them but we just know that she must have been a woman of very fine character because she must have belonged to the upper strata.

M: And you don't know her name?

C: No, because she died, you see, and my mother was just a

baby and my grandfather put her into an English boarding school because he had nobody to take care of her. It was a very select English boarding school here in Honolulu and he put her there when she was about, I guess, two or three years old--just a baby.

M: This is your mother we're talking about now.

C: My mother, um hm. And there's where she stayed for a few years. He went to see her one day and saw her running around with her bare feet and he said, "My daughter running around with bare feet. That will never do. I don't want anyone to see her running around in her bare feet." So he put her in the French convent where they couldn't see her running around.

M: The French convent here?

C: Yes, on Fort Street. He didn't want his daughter to be seen walking in bare feet, so you can see the class he came from. That's why he shut her up in this convent. Some very select French sisters had the school. All the finest people here sent their daughters there for a very select education, so that's where my mother went.

M: Do you remember the name of it?

C: Yes. It was called the Sacred Hearts Convent on Fort Street. They moved out to Kaimuki I think. It's called the Sacred Hearts Academy; same branch.

M: Oh, I see. Wow, that's fascinating.

C: So that's where she was raised from the time she was a little girl until she was married. She left school to be married to my father.

M: I wonder how in the world did he meet her?

C: Oh, I do know how he met her. This must have been quite a nice romance. My mother was very proficient in French. She read it and wrote it and understood it as a Frenchwoman would because she'd been brought up with the French sisters. She was there for about twenty years. No, maybe not twenty but a good long time. I don't know whether she was engaged to teach in Kohala or was engaged by a family there to teach French to the children. I don't know how she got to Kohala. That's where quite a number of the better-known people here started off, in Kohala, and I can't think of their names now. You see, I lived in San Francisco for twenty-five years. I've gotten away from

many of these associations. However, my father was a great friend of one of those men who belonged to one of those families. That's how she met him.

M: Oh, I see. What was your father doing in Kohala?

C: I guess, sugar mill. I have an idea it was a sugar mill. That's what he went for. There's a big sugar mill in Kohala too that I didn't think about. That must have been what he was doing. So the romance started there, then they were married and after they were married he went to Maui where I was born.

M: Where were they married?

C: Kohala. That's where they met and they were married there and one of these famous men of a well-known family was my father's best man. I should have those names down, but I've been gone so long. Well anyway, he was best man to my father and one of those ladies up there was my mother's maid of honor, people that she met there. People all liked her very much. She was much of a lady, you know, being brought up in a French convent, so she got in very nicely with anyone who was educated and well brought up. In fact, she was quite a snob. (Lynda laughs) We were all brought up kind of a little bit that way, you know.

M: Uh huh.

C: Well, she had a good education.

M: Well, your father came from a rather aristocratic background too.

C: Oh yes. Yes, he did. I think it shows a little bit. I think it does. I think our family is quite distinctive looking, all of them--all the members. Now I'll show you this one. This is my niece. (recorder turned off and on again) It makes a big difference.

M: Well now, let's see. Your parents went to Maui.

C: Yes, that was his first position, I think, after they were married. I think, because my brother--no maybe not. I was born on Maui and the house there was built for my father and it seems it was built just in time for my arrival, so my mother must have lived in Kohala for awhile when she was married. And the first, my brother, must have been born in Maui.

M: What's your brother's name?

C: Charles Hopkins Cowan. But you see, he must have been born in Kohala where they were married because I don't think there was any other baby in the family until I came along and Maile, so my brother must have been four years old when I was born. So he must have been born in Kohala. Now I'm just surmising this.

M: Um hm. Um hm.

C: I know someone who's here from Maui, a Mrs. [Agnes Fleming] Baldwin. "Oh yes," she said, "I know where you were born. That house was built for your father." So from that I realized that we must have just arrived before I came.

M: Do you remember anything? Were you there long enough?

C: Well, no, but I went back and saw the house. From the time that I was there, it was a very impressive building. It was quite large, on a hill with trees and terraced. A very lovely place.

M: How long did your father stay at Maui there?

C: We left Maui when I was four years old, so he was only there probably about six years, then he became manager of Kahuku Sugar Plantation down here on Oahu. That was a good position. There, he was just assistant; here, he was really a manager. Then we lived there until he was taken ill, then he was retired for two years. We lived in Honolulu.

Now that must be getting us up to the time of the Revolution [of 1893]. Yes, the revolution when the Americans came here. They treated the Queen [Liliuokalani] very shamefully. She was a queen even if she was a Hawaiian queen and they imprisoned her. The people who lived here were very angry. We just called those Americans every awful name that we could think of because they didn't treat the Hawaiian queen the way we thought she should be --we who came from Europe, my father and all the other Europeans. There were quite a number here.

You see, the Hawaiians, in the early days, I guess saw that they wouldn't be able to hold the place. They wrote to Queen Victoria [to ask] if she wouldn't take over the Hawaiian Islands, so they sent out Lord Thomas [British Rear Admiral Richard Thomas], I guess it was, to come over. The reason I remember his name is because Thomas Square was named after him, a British diplomat. He looked over the place and evidently decided it was too far-removed for them to take any interest in the place, so they refused to take it. Then the Americans stepped in. They didn't ask any permission, they just took it. They claim

that's what the Americans do. They did it in Mexico and they did it every place else. They just take it.

M: Right. Right. Wait just a second. [See p. 39]

END OF SIDE 1/1ST TAPE

C: We were all on the side of the queen. There was this revolution and of course my father and everybody else. . . . Of course he wasn't well yet, I don't think. I don't know. Maybe we weren't living here. Yes, we were because I remember as a little girl there was martial law and we couldn't go out; we had to stay in our houses. Yes, I must have lived then in Honolulu during the revolution. I remember definitely these Hawaiian soldiers coming into our house to be hidden from the Americans while they were --like guerilla warfare, you know. I can remember that.

M: Oh really?

C: Um hm. So I must have lived through that revolution in Honolulu. Oh yes, it was very exciting because Mr. [Robert W.] Wilcox was one of the brave men who was fighting for the queen and I think we hid him. I'm not too sure, but the name Wilcox stays in my mind and he escaped in the mountains, got free. I think we hid him or something. I don't remember. Maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but I have a great imagination. I write stories. (laughter) I've written about fifty stories.

M: You have?

C: And I have two here now that are ready to be published I think. I feel that I can do better if I write five or six stories and send all five or six to a publisher and let them know that they'll have more stories coming than just one story. They're not interested in just one story, they want several--some newpapers and magazines. If they can get a story once a month from me they would probably take it, so I think I'll just wait and get maybe five or six finished and then send them off at once.

M: Very good.

C: You want to read one of my little stories?

M: Sure!

C: Would you?

M: Yeh.

C: Okay. When we finish this I'll let you read one. (airplane noise) It's ready to go out and the other one is just about ready to go, excepting--this is not recorded, is it?

M: I'll turn it off. (recorder turned off and on again)

C: They had two children, myself and my brother, and we moved to Kahuku and then my father was taken ill.

M: Oh, I know. We were talking about the revolution.

C: Oh, that. Yes, that's right, we were at the revolution. That's when my father was ill. Evidently he must have been still recovering, because why were we living in Honolulu? We never lived in Honolulu excepting when he was sick, so he must have been still on the sick list when the revolution broke out. That was 1900 [1893] and so we must have still been there.

Then the revolution was over, the Americans won, and the queen was--what's the word they use when they put a queen off the throne?--dethroned.

M: Deposed?

C: Disposed of, yes. She wasn't killed; she was just a prisoner--I think a prisoner in her own palace, and then the Americans took over. I was there when the first president --it was President [Sanford Ballard] Dole. He was President of the Territory [of Hawaii]. [He was President of the Republic of Hawaii and the earlier Provisional Government; and first Governor of the Territory of Hawaii.]

M: Governor.

C: Governor of the Territory of Hawaii. (cuckoo clock calls eleven o'clock) I think the next governor was--I can find this in my history book. Do you want a definite name?

M: That's okay. I can look it up.

C: I lived under a monarchy. That's something I think is worthwhile quoting. I lived in a monarchy, I lived in a territory, and I lived in a state; lived under three different forms of government. [Five, actually, including a provisional government and a republic.]

M: Well, how did your parents feel? Did they feel strongly in favor of the queen?

C: Oh yes. We were all Britishers. My father put us all un-

der the British flag. We were all Britishers at that time and all the Britishers living here joined the revolution on the side of the queen. (civil defense signal sounds) If you go back in history, you'll find that all those with an English or Scotch background were not fighting against the queen, they were with the queen. They called them Royalists. They were fighting for the queen and they fought hard and well and many of them were killed.

M: Yeh, I know. [Some were wounded but no one was killed during the Revolution of 1893.] Along about that time, the plague started, huh?

C: Yes, it must have been just over. This revolution must have been just over when the plague started. [Bubonic plague was discovered in Chinatown in December 1899.] There was no revolution when the plague occurred because we were living in Aiea then. My father was building another sugar mill in Aiea. And my brother came back at that time from Scotland--a young man, handsome as he could be and very Scotch.

M: Why was he in Scotland?

C: He went back for his education. In those days all well-to-do families sent their sons back to the old country for an education, so my brother was sent back when he was nine years old and came back when he was nineteen, fully equipped. He was nineteen when he came back and just in time to take his position as a guard on the boundary between Honolulu Sugar Plantation and Honolulu, guarding the boundary and not letting anyone come through. He had a revolver and he had to get out there every night to watch. There was a long line of them all watching the boundary.

M: Why?

C: To keep people from coming in with the plague. That was the plague area. All those acres of plague country, all those buildings were burnt down. You know, the rats were infected with the plague, so they had to guard this section. No one was allowed in or out without being examined.

M: And where was this boundary?

C: Between Aiea--that's the Honolulu Sugar Plantation--and Honolulu. That's the first plantation out. Well, that boundary was closed. There was no trespassing along and these men were guarding that whole line then. I don't know how many there were but my brother was one of them.

M: Wow. What else can you remember about that period?

C: The plague? Oh, it was a terrible time.

M: What kind of precautions did people take?

C: Oh, like all dangerous things, they had to watch their diet and they had to cook everything and water had to be boiled. They were very careful about the food they ate and living conditions had to be clean.

M: Did you see any actual cases?

C: Oh no. Oh no, you never could get anywhere near a case. No. They turn black I believe. Black plague. It came from a flea bite from a rat. Of course that Chinatown area, where it started, was a thickly condensed area and the Chinese lived there, you know, kind of in squalor. That's where the plague usually starts--in squalor. It was a very large area and that's what was infected, so they had to burn it out. It practically burned all of Chinatown. That's the picture I was trying to find for you. I will find it. It shows you just how much of that area was burned in Chinatown. You know where River Street is?

M: Yeh.

C: Well, that was all burned, all that section. All of that was burned.

M: It must have put a lot of businessmen out of business.

C: Well, they built it right up again after it was all cleared off and the danger was gone. It went right on up and it's been very busy ever since.

M: Yeh, right. Okay. What happened then after your father--can you carry on with your family story?

C: Well, my father went from one plantation to the next and I don't think I remember the sequence, but he lived practically all of his life on some plantation and the last one we went to was in Kona. He went up there as manager of the Kona Sugar Company. That was the last plantation that he managed and I was then about fourteen or fifteen years old and we had to have a governess. We were sent to boarding school in Honolulu, the same school Mother went to and we were little wild Indians, I guess.

M: Who is "we"?

C: Oh yes. Well, there were four of us at the convent at one time and none of us did very well. (laughter) Anyway, I can still hear that sister: "Miss Charlotte!" I'd be turning handwheels [cartwheels] and whatnot. We came from the country. (laughter)

M: When did you go to the boarding school for the first time?

C: We must have gone to boarding school when we were seven or eight years old. I don't remember. We had a governess at first when we were little, then we went to the boarding school.

M: This was at the Sacred Hearts place?

C: Yes, Sacred Hearts. I was there for several years. They tolerated us, I guess. I think I was about fourteen when we went to Kona, and then we had a governess.

M: You didn't ever go to public school then?

C: No, none of us ever did.

M: Was that your mother's idea of . . .

C: Well, in those days public school just wasn't good enough for us, I guess. (laughter)

M: I haven't got all the names of your brothers and sisters, which I should do.

C: Oh, we were a big family. There were eight of us.

M: There was Charles.

C: Charlie was the eldest, then Mother lost two babies in between, then I came along. Then after I came I had a sister, Violet. She became a nun and she died as a nun in California. She was a very lovely person. She taught music. Then my other sister . . .

M: You were all raised in the Catholic Church, then, I guess?

C: Yes, we were all born and raised--oh yes, my mother was a Catholic and a very good one. We all became good Catholics. In fact, I'm still a good Catholic but I don't go to church. And then Georgie was a nurse. She took up nursing.

M: Georgie?

C: Georgie. Well, Helen was her name but we called her Georgie after my Uncle George. Her name was Georgiana, that's right. Georgiana was born. Then after Georgie was my brother, James. He's dead. Then after James came my sister, Maile, who's here with me now--Mrs. Maile Thevinen.

M: That's six.

C: And then after Maile came my sister, Martha. She's Mrs. Gregg now. She married a Scotchman. And then after Martha came Bob [Robert Cowan], the youngest in the family--the baby. He worked in the bank for many years and retired as a vice-president of First Hawaiian Bank.

M: Hm, that's a big family--eight kids.

C: Eight living. There were eleven of us altogether but the others died. Yes, a big family and a very happy family. My mother was a very good organizer. She never gave us any time to get naughty. She kept us so busy. She taught us to sew and she taught us to do fancy pillow lace on a pillow--you know that's with a bobbin--and we made our dolls' clothes, we made hats for our dolls, we had flower gardens to take care of. We liked to do it; it wasn't a hardship. In Kona I had two flower beds from the front gate to the front door, on both sides of the walk, of Lord Beaconsville pansies. The Lord Beaconsville pansies are pansies of every shade of blue from the darkest to the lightest. Those were two of my gardens. Now you know.

Of course we had lots of servants. We were brought up with servants from the time I can remember. You didn't even dress yourself in those days because we had lots of servants, Japanese and Portuguese. Portuguese did the washing and ironing, and the Japanese did the housework, and Chinese did the cooking, so we had plenty of help. But I'd say, "Oh, Mother, I want to have a garden of these lovely seeds." You know, I had the package. "All right. Where do you want to have it?" "Maybe on the side of the walk." "Oh, that would be very nice." My mother very much approved of that. "You get the yardboy to dig the garden up for you and get it all ready." So I didn't do any work really but plant the seeds. I don't think I even watered them, but those were my two gardens.

Then we had horses. Each of us had a horse to ride.

M: This was in Kona.

C: Yes. We had horses to ride, so we had to take care of our horses. We didn't do very much, but we were supposed to brush them down and make them look nice and we would pet them. And we all had animals--cats and dogs and every-

thing. Well, you know, a regular farm. And somebody had guinea pigs. Do you know what a guinea pig is?

M: Um hm.

C: All right. Well, they said if you put salt on its tail--what was it? And it doesn't have a tail. We got awfully funny stories about our guinea pigs and other things. I think my sister ran down to see if she could put salt on the tail but she couldn't find the tail. (laughter) Oh dear, that was funny. Well, let's see. We had a very happy family anyway.

I had my first beau when I was in Kona. I didn't know it at the time. (laughter) I was about fourteen or fifteen. I guess I was large for my age. I'm afraid I'm telling you too much.

M: No, just great.

C: Is it? Is this what you want?

M: Uh huh. Uh huh.

C: Well anyway, he worked on the plantation. He was the son of a Presbyterian minister and had a reputation of being rather wild. I didn't know this of course. I was very much a child until I was twenty, I think. I didn't know the facts of life at all; I was a baby. Really, that's true. I really didn't. I didn't know the facts of life until I was at normal school. That's right. I was at [the Territorial] Normal School getting my teacher's certificate when I was over twenty and we were studying the bees and the birds and I began to wake up. (Lynda laughs)

M: That was sort of delayed, wasn't it?

C: Well, I was too much interested in so many other things, I guess, that sex wasn't something that I even thought about. Well, this young man used to go up in the mountains and come back down with great big beautiful bunches of white ginger and he'd give it to me, you know, and I'd rave of course and I'd love it. My mother, I think, saw something coming that I didn't see, and one day he gave me a very pretty little jeweler's box and I took it and opened it. It was a very beautiful diamond and pearl crescent--beautiful thing--and I was so proud of it. "Where'd you get that?" "Oh, Charlie gave it to me." "You know you can't have that," she says. "I'm going to give it back to Charlie." And I said, "Oh no, I want it." "No," she said, "you can't have it. Girls don't take presents like that from a man, you know. You take flowers, that's all right,

but not like that. He's going to get it back." So she gave back my beautiful pin. (laughter)

M: You were a little young.

C: I was too young. Oh, much too young. I didn't know what it was all about.

M: Your father was manager at Kona.

C: Yes, he was manager, and he had his last stroke there too. He was subject to strokes. He had his first one in Kahuku, you know, then he had his second one in Kona and my mother knew it was coming. His office was up the hill a little way and she saw him coming home one afternoon a little early, zigzagging down the road, and she said, "Your father's had another stroke." She knew the symptoms I guess, so when he got to the house, the Japanese doctor was already there and drew blood from his arm to relieve the pressure and he got over the stroke. He didn't have a stroke; was back to work the next day. They relieved the pressure, you see.

M: Does that actually work?

C: Oh yes. He went back to work. He was all right. He got better, but he retired that year, I think, and he built our home in Kona. It was a very lovely big place because he thought he was going to retire and live in Kona, but he wasn't well so we had to move back to Honolulu and we came to live in the same house he built for us when he left Kahuku. We still had the home on Wilder Avenue and we lived there and he had another stroke, a very bad one, and that's where he died. He must have died in 1920, 1922. Maybe 1918 he died while sixty-five years old--too young, but better to go than be paralyzed for life.

And then my Aunt Lottie in Scotland and I had corresponded for many years and she always sent me presents, usually nice pretty gloves and things we don't wear here. She invited me to come and spend a year with her and sent me two thousand dollars, and I couldn't go that year so I put the money in the bank, and then I wrote and said that I could manage it the next year. My father had gone then, and so I took my first trip to Europe and I stayed with her.

I had a friend who had a shopper in New York. You just go to New York in your old clothes and they take you to one of these fine shops and fit you out so you look a million, you know. And so she said, "Well, you just contact Mrs. Brown and she'll fix you up. You'll look all right when you arrive in Scotland." So she did. She

fixed me up with a beautiful brown coat with a beaver collar on it and a hat that sort of matched the collar and a few dark dresses, and I looked like a million.

So when I arrived in Scotland, why, my aunt looked like a million too but I guess she thought I'm a little taller than she is. She met the train and she said, "Well, I didn't expect such a distinguished-looking person." (laughter) Oh yes, she was quite impressed with me, I guess, and here I was, so afraid she wouldn't think I looked nice, you know, so I got fitted out so I did look pretty good.

And so I stayed with her and, oh, it was so cold in Scotland. I had to go and buy spats and wear them every day and heavy shoes. I loved it though. I loved winter in Scotland. It was beautiful.

My brother Charlie wrote to me and said they were having a new baby--expected a new baby--and at that time there was a little brown bird--it must have been early spring--that they call mavis in Scotland. And I said, "Oh, mavis," so I wrote back and said, "Call her Mavis." So she's called Mavis today and it always makes me think of my trip to Scotland. (Lynda laughs) So I said to her, "Well, I named Mavis from Scotland." She said, "Yes, we know that." Of course she's married now and a grandmother.

Well, I spent Christmas with them and then I went to Paris and lived there for three or four months in a pension. I usually went to a very good hotel in the beginning and then found a list of good pensions, and then I would go to a pension and live for a couple of months much more reasonably and much more interesting. So then I found this pension on Rue de Chateaubriand. Oh, I remembered it. Rue de Chateaubriand, right off the Champs Elysees. It was a nice neighborhood and not far from the Louvre.

So I joined the American Club and met some Americans and we would meet every once in awhile at a place, and from them I got some information about the different countries and where to go and what to see. Well then, I planned my tour to go by way of the Swiss mountains down to Milan. I wanted to see "The Last Supper."

M: Da Vinci.

C: Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" and it was right there in an old refectory where the monks ate. At the end of the room was this beautiful "Last Supper." They'd renovated it I think. It was getting a little seedy looking when I saw it. I did Milan quite well--the grand opera--and I stayed in Milan for about a week maybe. Went to all the different museums and art galleries and so on.

M: Was this all on your two thousand dollars?

C: Yes. Oh, I had some money saved up too. She said, "Now when you go abroad on the Continent, remember I'm your banker. I don't want you to use the money I gave you. You just call on me." Well, I didn't. I managed to get along without any more help from her. Of course, living in pensions was reasonable and my clothes were quite appropriate, so I didn't have to buy anything very much. I did buy a hat in Germany for about fifty cents. The mark was very low. I got a great big stack like this for about five dollars. That was when the mark was so very low.

Then in February I went across to London and went to a hotel for a few days--very nice hotel out near the Kew Gardens. I didn't have to walk very far to the Kew Gardens. I stayed there for not very long because I wanted to take in Oberammergau. So then I went to Oberammergau, stayed in Munich. This is when I had that trouble with the money, when I went to Oberammergau, but you got that story.

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

How far did I go? Was I in Munich now?

M: You had come back to England. I think you were talking about that.

C: Oh, I was back to England?

M: Yeh. I think it stopped there.

C: Well, I went from London to Edinburgh to stay a few weeks longer with my aunt and her family, and then I came back to Honolulu in August, ready for the next year of school. I took the year of sabbatical off.

M: You'd taught before that, then?

C: Oh yes. Oh yes. That's how I got some money put aside for my trip. Yes, I taught before that. I taught after I graduated from the normal school.

M: What year did you graduate, do you remember?

C: Nineteen eight, I think.

M: Nineteen hundred eight [1908]. Wow.

C: I think my first position was in 1908.

M: Could you backtrack and tell me something about the normal school, what it was like, what kind of education you got?

C: Well, of course it was my first public school.

M: How old were you when you started at normal school?

C: Eighteen or nineteen, I think. I guess I was beginning to get bored with life and had to do something. Nobody wanted me to teach school. "Oh no, you don't have to go and learn how to teach school." "Oh," I said, "I have to do something."

M: This is your family that weren't in favor of it.

C: Yes. There was no need of my going out to teach or work, so I was the first one that sort of broke loose I guess. Oh, of course my brother was working. He came back from Scotland and he was working on the Island of Hawaii. And I was the next one, so I wanted to get out and do something too. So I learned how to be a teacher and liked it very much. I was there three years. I think it was a three-year course.

And remember, I had had no real public school education and I went right out into this public school, you know. It wasn't easy at first because, well, when you just had one teacher and then you have to go in with all this academic work where you go to this room for one thing and that room for another. It was all strange to me, but I managed to get through all right.

I remember there was one teacher--I guess she was very cranky. I went in one day very tired, I guess, and she said, "You don't have to come in like that. You don't have to come slumping into the room." I was so hurt, I thought, "Well, I'm not going to come back here." (laughter) Well, I don't know. She was just the kind of a person that you wouldn't like and she certainly didn't present herself to me in a very nice way.

M: What sort of subjects did you study?

C: I just can't remember what subjects I took. I know I took geography. I remember that because I was always selected in the class to go and put the map of the world on the board from memory. "Miss Cowan, will you put the map of the world on the board?"

M: The map of the world from memory?

C: Yes. So I always was assigned that job, and even to this day. . . . Yes, I got to put the map of the world on the board.

M: Fantastic.

C: I could do it too; I'd just draw a sketch up there and put it on, you know. So that always was my job. That I remember very definitely, so it must have been the subject of geography that appealed to me. I liked history too. Oh, we studied nature study, all about the bees and the bugs, and physical ed [education]. Everybody had to take physical ed.

M: What did that consist of?

C: Oh, gymnasium.

M: Sports, you mean?

C: No, just in the class they'd put you through the exercises once a week maybe, something like that. I suppose it was to acquaint us with what we might be expected to do in the schools. I have an idea that's what it was for.

M: Was the normal school education comparable to a four-year college course now?

C: Yes, it would be sort of. Yes, it was. Anyone who'd been through college would go there to get their teacher's degree. They couldn't teach without a year or two at normal.

M: Oh, I see.

C: It was a teachers'-training school and there were quite a number of college graduates there when I was there. I enjoyed my work at the normal school very much.

M: Where was the school then?

C: Well, do you know Honolulu very well?

M: Fairly well.

C: Well, do you know where there is a retirement home on Lunalilo Street. Oh, let me see. Lunalilo is that big street, then there's a street that goes down on the slopes of Punchbowl. It's a retirement home today. I don't know what it's called. Where the normal school used to be they built a retirement home for the aged. It's right on the eastern slope of Punchbowl in the rather level area. It's

not on the side of the mountain.

M: Did you live at home and go to school?

C: Yes, I lived at home then. We lived in Honolulu at that time.

M: You lived in the house on Wilder that you mentioned.

C: Yes, um hm. Yes, I was living at home and Wilder Avenue wasn't too far. We had streetcars in those days with horses to draw them. Just the horse-drawn streetcar, and some of the hills were too steep, so we had to get out and push the car. (laughter)

M: You actually did?

C: Oh, the men and boys loved it. Yes, just one horse. In fact, there were one or two places there at Punahou School. I didn't go to Punahou, but the Punahou School children used to wait until it got to the foot of the hill and then they'd all climb on to make it so heavy that the horse couldn't pull it up the hill. (Lynda laughs) Always some kind of a trick.

M: Well then, after you finished at normal school, you taught. Where did you first teach?

C: My first school--it's so long ago. Oh, I went out with glowing colors. That's right, I forgot. I was assigned to the principalship of an eight-room school.

M: Wow!

C: Yes, wow is right. She had a sabbatical leave for two years and that's where they assigned me, right at this eight-room school in Kona. We must have been living in Kona when I graduated. No, I was living in Kona when I went to normal school. I think I said I was living in a boardinghouse in Honolulu.

M: No.

C: Oh well, yes, when I decided to go to the normal school against my family's wishes, I decided that I'd have to live in a boardinghouse in Honolulu, so my mother had some friends in Honolulu that did a little inquiring around and got this place for me. It was quite nice. I had a room to myself on the second floor.

M: Where was the boardinghouse?

C: I think I could have walked it to the normal school. It was in the Punahou district. I don't know. Actually, I've lost track of Honolulu. I've been away for twenty-five years. I just don't know Honolulu very well, so that I just don't know how I could associate that building with anything you would know, but it was in the Makiki district. You know Makiki?

M: Um hm.

C: Do you know where that old cemetery was on Wilder Avenue?

M: Um hm.

C: Well, I lived down about two blocks from that cemetery, I think on Hastings Street [now Nehoa Street]--an old house, two-story, very nice place, and I had a room in that building. I remember definitely looking out of my window and seeing the yardboy beating a dog; beating it. He had a chicken tied to its neck and he was just beating this dog. I went to the window and I said, "My father is a policeman. If you don't stop that, he's going to take you to jail!" (laughter)

M: He probably was no such thing, was he?

C: Oh, he stopped beating the dog. He did. Oh yes, he stopped and I think he shook his fist at me. I don't remember, but he didn't like it. But I didn't care; I couldn't see that dog getting beaten.

M: Why was a chicken wrapped around him?

C: Well, I think it had probably killed the chicken and he wanted to teach the dog that he couldn't do that. I have an idea that's why. He was breaking the dog from killing the chickens. Well anyway, I wasn't going to bother about that. He had no license beating that dog.

Oh, we had a horse down in Honolulu. I used to ride horseback. This was when the family moved down. You want to go on with this first--normal school living?

I had a friend who had a very beautiful house downtown on Alakea Street where the YWCA is today. That big old house was hers and she came to me and she said, "You're not living in this place anymore. I have a home and lots of room and I want you to stay with me." Millionaire friend. And of course I was delighted. Much better than living in this place. So she came and got me and took me down. I had a lovely room and bath on the second floor. That home was her home. [1041 Alakea Street]

M: The YWCA on Richards Street?

C: Yes, only her front entrance was on Alakea Street. I think she gave it to the YWCA and then they used Richards Street for the entrance, but her entrance was on Alakea.

M: This is the same building that the YWCA is in?

C: Yes, uh huh.

M: Same building?

C: Same building. The main part of the house was on Alakea Street. We had a swimming pool where that one is, I remember, and I think we had that sort of a loge, you know, between the swimming pool and the garden, but we didn't have anything on Richards Street. That was the back yard. See, there was nothing there. And so I lived there for three years. [The present YWCA Building was built in 1926 and Miss Cowan would have lived in the residence there from 1905 to 1908.]

M: Who were these people?

C: Mrs. Sam [Samuel] Allen.

M: Allen? [Bathsheba M. (Mrs. Samuel C.) Allen]

C: Allen & Robinson [Company]. The firm of Allen & Robinson. They were great shipping people, I think. And so that's where I stayed for the three years that I was at normal school.

Well anyway, I graduated from the normal school and then was assigned to this school in Kona. Oh, my family was living in Kona. That's right. See, that's why I had to go to this boardinghouse.

M: I've forgotten now how come your family ended up in Kona.

C: Well, that's where we went from [Honolulu]. I think I told you that my father wanted to be manager of the Kona Sugar Company?

M: No, I don't think you did.

C: Yes, that's where we lived. We went to Kona and from Kona I went to the normal school. I think I told you that. (both now concern themselves with Lynda's child for several minutes) You can see I'm a bridge player--all the paraphernalia for bridge.

M: Yeh. So, let's go on with your story.

C: And so I lived there for three years with Mrs. Allen on Richards Street in the lap of luxury. It was just lovely. Then I graduated from normal school after three years and they assigned me to this principalship in Kona. Oh, it must have been fifteen miles away from where I lived, so I had to ride horseback back and forth every morning to school and then back again. It wasn't too bad. I was there for the two years and I liked it.

Then from there they sent me to Honolulu to a school. I think it was Kalihi Waena [Elementary School]. That's out in the Kalihi district. It's a big school. The other day here at Pohai Nani a lady came up to me and she said, "Are you Miss Cowan?" and I said, "Yes," and she said, "You taught me at Kalihi Waena."

M: Oh my. (laughs) That must have been back about 1912 or 1913.

C: Yes, about 1912.

M: Wow. What subjects did you teach then?

C: Well, I taught social studies, history and geography always. I never taught anything else. And art. I did teach art. I had a natural flair for art. I think that's probably why they made me draw pictures too. Illustrating pictures. I'd get up and draw something for some story. It was just a natural. . . . I made that little figurine and those flowers and I painted that picture. I took up artwork afterwards, but I had a natural ability I guess and it probably showed and so I did a lot of things like that first. So I taught Kalihi Waena social studies and I enjoyed it very much

One day they were having the girls dancing the Maypole and they asked me if I would play the piano for the Maypole dancers and I said, "Yes, I'd be glad to." So we got out there and they had about ten or fifteen Maypoles. It was a big school. I practiced the Maypole with the children for weeks, and the day of the Maypole came along and I was so nervous I couldn't play a note. I didn't know what anything was about. (Lynda laughs) Isn't that terrible? I didn't know a thing and I said, "Oh, my music!" and they put the music in front of me--blank! I couldn't see anything.

M: Oh my gosh.

C: I fainted off piano stools when I was a child taking piano lessons. We had to play for company. I had to play for

duets or something like that--two or three pianos; I would topple off. And so this day came. I never knew that I was that nervous as a grown-up, you know, and I couldn't see a thing. Fortunately, I can sit at a piano and play music--just play it--and it sounds pretty good, so I just played and played and played and everybody seemed to not mind it at all. The book was in front of me and all of a sudden I could read the book. Playing took the nervousness away and then all the music came up and we got right into the Maypole from my improvising. (Lynda laughs) Oh dear.

When I came here the first day, a lady came in: "Miss Cowan, would you say grace please?" Oh, I had been here a few days and I said, "Oh, I only know two graces and I don't know anything else." "What are they?" I said, "Well, that's the Scotch one, Bobby Burns's one, which is very nice. I like it." "Oh, we've had that one already." "And then I know the Quaker grace and that's very nice." "We've had that one already, Miss Cowan." I said, "Well, I don't know any others." (Lynda laughs) You know the Scotch one, don't you?

M: I've probably heard it, but what is it?

C: "Some can eat and have no meat; and some have meat but can not eat; but we have meat and we can eat, so let the Lord be thanked."

M: Oh yes. My father-in-law says that one.

C: Yes, that's right. That's the Scotch one. And the Quaker one. Do you know the Quaker one?

M: No.

C: You all hold hands and bow your heads and say your own.

M: Oh.

C: I like it. I think it's quite a nice idea.

M: Um hm.

C: So they excused me.

M: You got out of that one.

C: But I know perfectly well I would have probably fainted in front of a microphone. I can't do anything before the public. It's impossible. I get nervous.

M: And yet you can teach; you can get up in front of the class.

C: Well, at first I was very nervous even before the children but I got over it. But at first, yes, I was nervous. Um hm. Got tongue-tied, I guess. I do get tongue-tied even now. Now you see that poetry, telling it to you. I know it as well as I know my name, but just because I had to recite it to you, it left me. I'm quite nervous.

M: I wouldn't have thought so at all.

C: No, people don't but I am. I'm very highly strung, I think. I guess maybe everybody of my character or makeup is. Well, I guess I'm naturally artistic. I've done so many things in the art field, and then I have a writing ability. I write short stories and I've written a novel and I think when people are like that, they are a little bit nervous, highly sensitive.

M: Um hm.

C: And I just learned something this morning. I learned this from a girl who had a friend who was writing for a publication. (recorder turned off and on again) I had this principalship for two years, then I came back to Honolulu and taught at Kalihi Waena and played the piano for the Maypole dance and it went off with a bang. And I taught there, I think, for three years. I had one little boy. I suppose I shouldn't talk about the little boy that was so naughty. Should I?

M: Yeh.

C: This little fellow, he was sent down to me. He was about twelve years old--I think it was the fourth or fifth grade --and he turned to me and he says, "I fight all my teachers." And I said, "Well, why do you want to fight your teachers?" "I don't like 'em." And I thought, "Oh boy, what have I got here, a little beast?" So I was very sweet to him and I thought, "Well, I'm going to put you in the last row so you can't monkeyshine for everybody." So I took him down and gave him a seat in the last row. I hadn't turned my back when he took a ruler and threw it across the room and hit a little girl in the head.

M: Hm!

C: Well, I went down, grabbed him by his collar and he turned and the button in his collar choked him. Then he began to call for help. Everybody heard him in the school, calling

for help because he was choking, but I didn't choke him. He was turning on me. Fortunately, I was tall and he was short but strong and his arms weren't long enough to reach me, so he was just in hard luck, turning on his collar and choking himself and not giving me any trouble. But finally, in order to free my hand, he got his nails in these [wrist] veins here. He cut those veins in here, you see.

M: Oh my gosh.

C: Well, he just put his nails in there and grabbed, and I wasn't going to let go till I got him up to my desk where the principal had left a switch. And I tell you, I just gave him on his legs as hard as I could give it to him and he called for help. Oh, he was very apologetic and he wanted help and, oh, he was a different boy entirely. Then the principal came in and he said, "Miss Cowan, I'll finish him up. I'll do the rest of the whipping." I said, "Oh, I don't think so. Mr. Cox, I think he's had enough." So we didn't whip him anymore but we sent him home, I think.

Anyway, his parents came the next day to have me arrested, and so I showed them my arm. The mother said to me, "My son?" I said, "Yes." "Oh," she said, "he licks me all the time. He hits me. He's very bad at home." And I said, "And now you think I'm doing harm?" "No," he said, "you're very good." They were all different then when they saw that he had hurt me. His big brother in the other room said, "That's Tommy. He's getting the first licking of his life." (laughter)

M: Just what he needed. Isn't that something?

C: He was a good boy for the rest of the time, but he did land in jail eventually. He became a jailbird. Oh yes, he was just bad. Well, that was my one and only case where I had trouble and it wasn't my trouble; he made it himself. Well anyway, that was my school--Kalihi Waena.

Then from there I went to another school in Honolulu which was right around the corner from where I lived on Wilder Avenue. I think that school is still there--Kaahumanu [Elementary School]. I taught there for awhile and then I went abroad. I was gone for a year and I came back and I was assigned to a school in Manoa valley.

M: Oh. About what year would this have been, now?

C: Nineteen twenty-one [1921]. The reason I remember that is because I went abroad definitely with a plan of going to Oberammergau and that [Passion] Play is every ten years and 1920 was the year. That's how I keep that memory. So

it was in 1920 that I went to the Passion Play and I came back in 1921 and went to Manoa and that's where I learnt a very good lesson.

I had one little boy--I think it was the fourth or fifth grade--very bright. He would get his work done just like that. This little boy's eyes would go cross-eyed and I knew he was up to mischief. He'd do his work and finish it. He was so bright that he would get into difficulties. I thought, "Oh, I've got to get something for that child to do," and I happened to hear about children making doll's furniture and making a doll's house. I think I read it in some magazine. I had a friend who knew the owner of a tobacco store in town that had all these empty cigar boxes, so I contacted him and we got a big load of cigar boxes.

Well, I put little Ichiro--I think that was his name. I had a lanai-room and the stairs going down to the grounds and I put those boxes out there. And I said, "Ichiro, just as soon as you finish your work, would you like to take these boxes apart? Take the nails out and put the wood all together so we can make doll's furniture." Oh, he was just thrilled. Then he had three or four helpers. Children that got through went out and helped him and they broke up all these boxes and put them all aside for the furniture. I never had one speck of trouble with that boy. I kept him busy and then he kept the others busy.

When that was all done, why, then I got patterns of dressing tables. I went up to my friend's house and drew everything to a scale, even the three mirrors. We made the chairs and tables, everything to a scale, and drew up a pattern and these kids, with a coping saw, they'd cut it all out and they put those together. The girls made tatting and crochet for the linen, and the boys made the furniture--tables and chairs, beds. And they made lamps. The girls made little rag rugs and they made little containers for flowers, and we made a doll's house. That thing became a whole class project. Girls were making the sheets and pillow cases and all, just darling. They did beautiful work. And the boys made all the furniture and I never had a speck of trouble. They'd got started on this project and they were busy.

And then there was a fair or exhibition of children's work and my doll house was sent down to it and we got the prize for the best toy made in Hawaii.

M: My gosh. I bet those children were proud, huh?

C: Well, of course I was. The children were so happy, you know, and finally we sold it for fifty dollars.

M: That's a lot of money in those days.

END OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

C: From there I went to junior high school. From grade school I went to junior high and that was down on Emma Street, Central Grammar, and I taught there until I retired [in 1946]. And there--I do get into all kinds of difficulties.

We were studying the Greek unit and I was telling them how wonderful they were at sculpturing and how they could cut beautiful things out of soap. So I suggested that they all bring a cake of Ivory soap, the big size, to the room and all try and make something that the Greeks made and I had pictures of these beautiful things--little Pandora with a box on her knee which was beautiful and other things, you know, that they could never have made but they were all very attractive.

Well, I'm very enthusiastic myself. I think I can sell almost anything. They were all going at it and I wish you could have seen the soap all over the floor. Oh! (Lynda laughs) So I finally said, "Children, you'll have to sweep up this floor and take some of that soap home. Your mothers can use them for the washing." So they did. They tied it up; took all the soap.

I had maybe five groups that came to me during the day or maybe three--I've forgotten--but out of that group of say two hundred children, I got three artists. They made beautiful things. I got empty chalk boxes, painted them black, made a little pedestal and mounted each piece that they made in this black box with a little glass thing over it and I had them taken to the [Honolulu] Art Academy for exhibit.

M: Oh wow.

C: The one in charge there said, "Oh, Miss Cowan, all the artists want to meet you." Well, it was good work and it was exhibited well in those black cases. It looked just exactly like ivory.

Well, in order to learn how to do that, I had to make something to take to class to show them and I didn't know that I could carve. I learnt to do a beautiful Minerva's head with all the curls and, really, she was lovely in side view. I took that. Well, that was easy to do. Then I decided I'd do Pandora. Some famous Greek artist made her and I copied it out of a cake of Ivory soap. I got that inspiration in the morning about seven o'clock Sunday morning. I didn't go to the bathroom, I didn't eat breakfast, I didn't get dressed, I didn't have any lunch. Everything was gone but my little figurine. I worked on it

until seven o'clock at night and finished it.

M: Oh my gosh. That's enthusiasm all right.

C: And she was beautiful, just a beautiful thing. Very much like that, you know, only much smaller and much more beautiful because she was in a circle. Well, I put her in a little glass case and took her to class. Well, of course everybody admired her--all the teachers and all the children. Of course it gave them an idea of what they could do if they wanted to. It was so fragile. (recorder turned off and on again)

M: . . . your school experiences and we sort of got sidetracked.

C: Oh yes. I learnt something else. What did I learn? Oh, soap carving. That's right. They did that and I got quite a bit of recognition at the art academy for the children's work. They said they were very pleased with what the children had exhibited. Well, that's getting to the time when I came back from Europe, I guess, because it wasn't long after that when I quit--1946, after the war, after the blitz. Nineteen forty-one, I think, was the blitz [World War II].

M: Uh huh. (cuckoo clock calls the time)

C: And then I had a lot of war work to do. It was very hard. All civilians had to do something, you know, and of course teachers had to also. I did everything under the sun. We did fingerprinting and, well, women from the red light district had to be investigated. They'd come to the school and we'd have to ask about them and there was one woman, nice-looking. She was a lovely girl, a college graduate, and I said, "How did you come to take up prostitution?" "Well," she said, "I have a little boy and I want to give him all I can, get him a good lot of money." Her father, I believe, was a doctor. I couldn't see that at all and I said, "I just can't understand it." She said, "Well, I suppose people can't understand women doing those things." We had to interview them. What was the title that they always called themselves? They had a better name for themselves. It wasn't lady of leisure but a very nice title anyway. I've forgotten what it was.

M: What were they doing in connection with your school? I don't follow that.

C: The school was closed and we were turned into a civic center where the people could come there to be fingerprinted

and everything--all the information we could get from them. We worked all during the blitz. We were busy all day long, and then at night we were on duty. We had to go down there and sleep in our clothes two or three nights a week, just on guard. Yes, it was a strenuous time.

Then of course I had a car and I was on call to evacuate people in case of another blitz; to go down and get them and bring them up to places of safety.

M: And then in 1946 you decided to quit teaching?

C: No, we weren't teaching for several months. We were under martial law. No, we didn't teach for quite a long time. I don't know when we started to teach again. When the war was over was . . .

M: Nineteen forty-five.

C: Forty-five. And I retired when the war was over and then I went to Scotland.

M: Were you retirement age, then, when you retired?

C: No, I wasn't quite but I took it off anyway. No, I didn't go to Scotland in 1946. What did I do in 1946? Oh, I know. I had a friend who was teaching in Alaska and I retired and met her. I don't remember what I did that year. I took another trip to Europe. I took an ocean voyage this time, went on the Arcadia by way of the Orient and I did all of the countries that I hadn't done the first time in Europe. I did Norway and Sweden and Denmark and up the Sogne Fjord to Vik, the little town where the vikings came from. Went up on a Norwegian boat, sat next to a Norwegian lady who didn't speak any English and I didn't speak any Norwegian but we got along. (Lynda laughs) We became quite good friends. I had a book with words and she had an English dictionary. We got along.

Oh, it was a beautiful trip, all day on this Songe Fjord. And then we went to Vik where all the vikings came from and, believe it or not, up in that valley at the head of the fiord they grew apples and oranges and tropical fruit. In Norway!

M: Hmm. They must have a warm country.

C: And we stayed at a beautiful hotel. It looked a little bit like the old Royal Hawaiian, only much bigger than that. Huge hotel right there on the fiord. The boats from the fiord would go right to the dock and we'd jump off and the hotel was around the corner. It was very nice, a beautiful trip.

And then we took a bus there and went through Norway for five or six days by bus. We stopped at different farmhouses for the night, for meals. Then I went through Sweden the same way on a bus. Stockholm was our first stop in Sweden. Beautiful hotel. Sweden is almost like another Venice; they have so many canals and waterways. So I took a boat and went up this fiord. It was a beautiful trip. And then we saw the little mermaids, you know.

M: Yeh. Getting back to your family, though, I want to finish up the story of what happened to all of your brothers and sisters and your parents.

C: Oh, all my brothers and sisters. Where, back, do we go?

M: Well, maybe you could just kind of give me . . .

C: Let me see. One sister became a trained nurse. She wasn't very strong and she died quite young. And Maile became a stenographer--my sister, Mrs. Thevinen--and she did very well. She went to high school. She went to public school and got her typing and things and became a court stenographer and that's why she knows so much law. She can tell a lawyer, "Oh no, you can't do that. It's against the law," because she got to know the law pretty well working there. That's my sister who lives here. She's seven years younger than I but people think I am the youngest one.

M: (laughs) That must make her feel good.

C: Whenever they ask, "Which of you is the younger or the older," I change the subject as fast as I can because they all think she is and she's seven years younger. But she's had a family and sicknesses and things that I never had and I guess that makes a difference. But that's Maile.

And then my sister, Georgie, was the nurse. She died young. And my sister, Martha, and her husband live here out in Kaimuki. She married a Scotchman. My brother, Charlie--oh, I had his picture here this morning. I saw it. I'll show you his family.

M: You showed me his family.

C: That's his grandchildren, but he was here with his family. Well anyway, he was my oldest brother who was raised in Scotland and he lived here until he died. He died after the war. He lived to be sixty-five.

My other brother, Jim, who was younger than Maile, he died in California. He was working for an agricultural company. I've forgotten what they did. (they take time

out for cookies)

M: Let's see. We were talking about your other brother.

C: Oh yes, Jim. Jim died in California and he was sixty-five. My other brother, Bob, was vice-president of First Hawaiian Bank here. He retired about four years ago. He was very sad. He said, "I don't want to retire. I'm too young to retire. I like my work." Then he got to playing golf and having a good time and he forgot all about work. (laughter) So he's still playing around, having a good time; kept his youthful figure, I suppose, playing golf.

Well, there were eight of us. Georgie was the nurse. Violet was my sister who became a nun. She took music. She was a musician, went to California as a sister of Notre Dame and taught music and she died of a heart attack here. She came over for a visit, had a heart attack. The night before she died she said to the Mother Superior, "Why don't we have a conversational dinner tonight, sort of like a party?" So she went out and gathered some flowers and made the table look pretty. She came out here on a visit to see my mother and the family. There's a Notre Dame ranch out at Kaimuki. She stayed there with them and then died while she was here with a heart attack. The night that she asked to have a conversational supper, where they could all talk and have a good time, they found her dead in her bed the next morning. Wasn't that a premonition?

M: I'll say.

C: She went out first with a good time. She was my sister next to me, younger than I. I think that mentions all of them. Martha and Bill. They're still living here in Kaimuki. Maile is here and Bob is here. There're four of us living now.

M: And what about your parents?

C: Oh, my mother lived to be ninety. My father died quite young, I think I told you. He died before I went Europe. I went to Europe in 1920. He must have died shortly before that. He had a stroke. Well, that takes in the whole family, I guess.

M: And your mother, what did she do after he died?

C: Mother died here in Honolulu. I was in California, I think, when she died. She was ninety and very well, very able. Her mind was perfect. I wasn't here when she died. I was in California.

M: Were all the children grown and raised before your father died?

C: Oh yes, they were all grown, all working, all out, all doing something in life, all busy.

M: I see. You mentioned that you'd been on the Mainland for twenty-five years. You went to the Mainland then . . .

C: Right after the blitz was over. I went in 1946. The doctor sent me away. I did a lot of war work here after the war started. I did everything I could do to help and I guess I overdid. I have a way of just doing more than I should and I had a nervous indigestion. I couldn't eat anything. I was thin and I had great big black circles around my eyes and the doctor said, "Go away to San Francisco and don't come back until you're better." No doctor could really help me so I heard over the radio one day that there was a doctor in Oakland that says, "I can help anybody that other doctors don't help." Well, I went to see him.

He took my blood pressure and my temperature and everything. He says, "You're holding onto something. You've got to throw that off. I don't know what it is. Throw it off! You've got to let go." So he worked on me and I got better and better and better and got to be really quite well again. He was good. He was Dr. Sherman who had been a practicing physician for many years and then he retired and discovered he'd better do something that other doctors weren't doing. He was just finding out, I suppose, what people were sort of holding onto that didn't do them any good. He was very successful. He had a big clientele, did very well.

M: Well, what did you do for twenty-five years?

C: I did ceramics. I've got my electric kiln there. I made sixty-five dollars selling things, bought my equipment, and sold everything. I made lots of money on my things that I made. I didn't have a store. People would say, "Oh Charlotte, I like that. Would you make me one?" Yes. "Well, I'm going to pay for it." "No, I don't want any money for it." Well, before I knew it I was having money coming in all around and I paid for my equipment.

I came back here. I could open up a store here or a school or I could have a class. I have all my equipment here, all my molds, even the molds for the little figurine. Just turn them out like biscuits. But I can't find the clay I want. I want that white clay. Now that figurine there has only had her arms and her face and legs painted. The rest of her is just the clay with a glaze on

it. But do you think I can get that white clay here? No. It's green or terra cotta and I don't want that; I want the white. I can't work unless I have the white clay because I have paint. I made six of those little girls--one in pink, one in yellow, one in lavendar, one in blue, and one in white. Something like that. I gave them all away, excepting the one in white I kept. She's the original one; the rest all come from the molds.

I have one flower mold like that. My friend saw it and she said, "Oh, Charlotte, I have a friend who wants one the size of a dinner plate." "Oh," I said, "I don't have a mold large enough for such a large bouquet of flowers." "Well, if you'll make it, she'll pay you any price you ask." And I had to make three before I got one perfect one because you never know why they crack. I don't know why they crack. It might be a little bit too thin; it might be a little bit too thick, but they had little cracks. One went down the bottom. You wouldn't notice it but if you're going to sell it you want a perfect one, so I made three. She paid me sixty-five dollars for it, for that one piece, and I gave the large one to the girl who took the order--the other one that cracked--and then I gave the other one to my sister, Maile, and she gave it to her daughter, Bea, and so Bea has the other one.

But anyway, I've had loads of fun doing the ceramics and the painting. And then I did miniatures. I painted that grandmother. I took a course in colored photography because everything I've had to do has been forced on me. The reason I took that course is because my aunt had a copy of that great-granny miniature on the mantelpiece in Scotland and I said, "Aunt Lottie, I don't know who this is but she has eyes like my niece. The eyes are identical." "Well," she said, "she could. She's your great-granny." I admired her so much that she had a regular artist paint the large one for me. He painted it and I thought it was painted on canvas like most things are and I had it hanging on the wall in that frame in Honolulu in a little house where I was living and the door must have slammed and when I came home it was on the floor. The glass was cracked, then I discovered the painting was on glass. So I took it to San Francisco and I said, "Is there any way that you can reproduce this?" "No, the cracks will show. We can't do a thing for you." And I said, "Well, could you take a photograph of it with so very, very light print that I could paint over the cracks?" "Oh yes, we could do that." So then I took a course in painting (Lynda laughs)--photographic painting.

And then she did that one and you can see the cracks underneath the paint. She just left the imprint of the picture so I could follow the picture and I painted it. It's not too good. I have a cataract and at that time my

cataract was beginning to interfere with my vision, so there is something wrong about the eyes but I always think, "Well, someday. . . ." I could do it now because I've had my cataract removed and I've got good eyesight. I see the defects now, you see, so I could really go back and do it but I haven't taken out my paints and I think, "Well, nobody knows the difference so I'll just let it go." So that's why that looks the way it does.

M: Hm.

C: So that's my handicraft too.

M: So that's how you kept active and everything, was just all your art projects?

C: Now?

M: No, I say, when you were on the Mainland you kept busy with all these crafts and projects.

C: Yes, that's the last one I did. Yes. Ceramics and color photography and writing, and so far I haven't sold anything in the writing field but I have a sixty-thousand-word novel which has to be revised and I'm not looking forward to that at all. It's a big job.

M: Yeh. Yeh. Well, you certainly gave me a lot of good . . .

END OF SIDE 2/2ND TAPE

END OF INTERVIEW

Re-transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

NOTE: p. 11 On February 25, 1843, on the unauthorized basis of protecting British interests in the Hawaiian Kingdom, Lord George Paulet coerced King Kamehameha III into ceding his kindgom to Great Britain. British Rear Admiral Richard Thomas, who had instructed Paulet to guard British interests in the kingdom, arrived in Honolulu on July 26, 1843 after receiving a statement of Britain's policy of non-interference in the Hawaiian government. Thomas returned sovereignty to Kamehameha III in a ceremony at Thomas Square on July 31, 1843.

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THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.